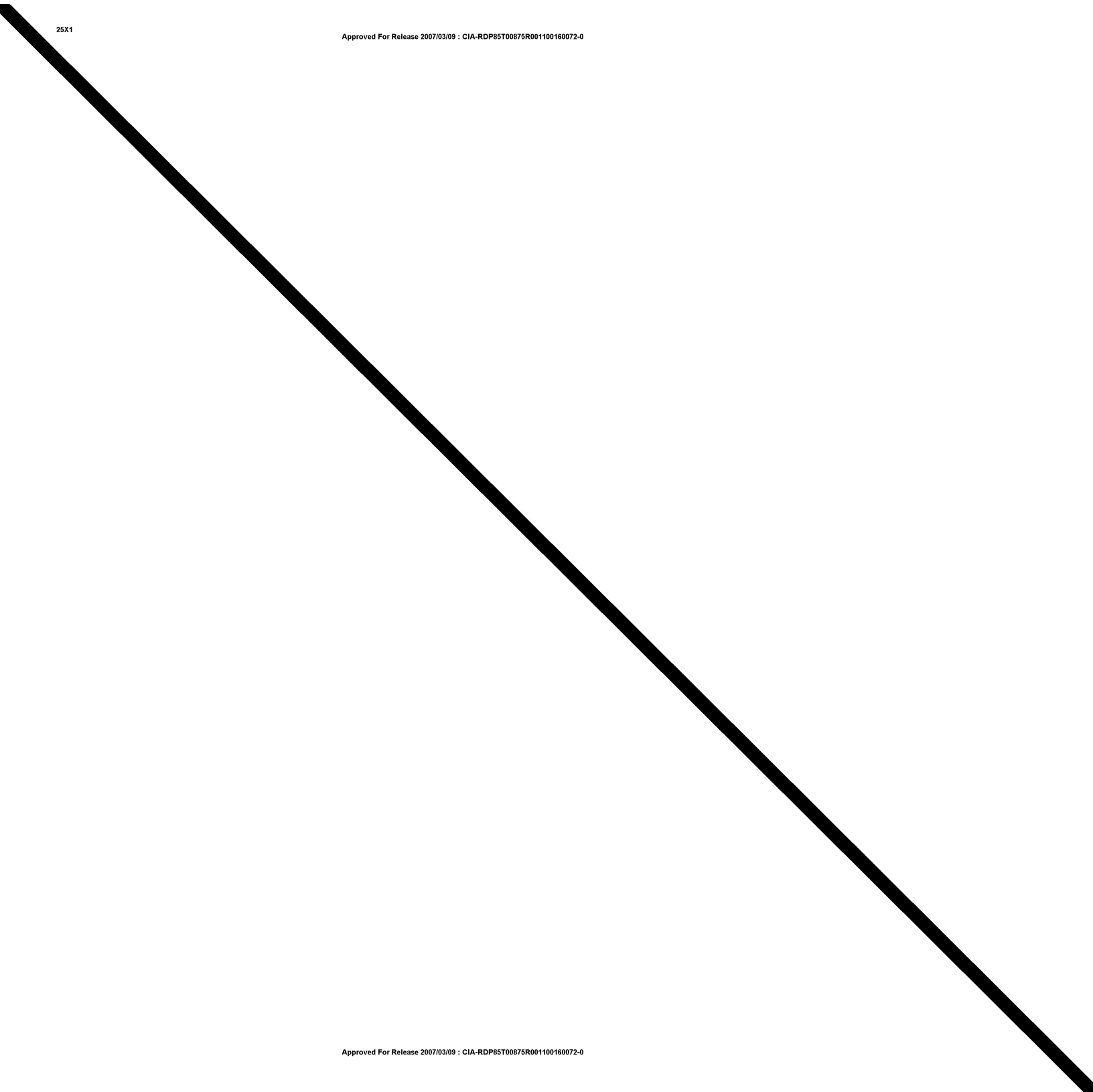

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Lawrence S. Eagleburger

Be sure he finds OK

When we talked last summer about papers for HAK's China trip, you included this topic. Here is a paper on the subject.

I would appreciate early word from you if you plan to ask for any updated studies when the trip is scheduled.

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[redacted]

Acting Director of Current Intelligence

28 September 73
(DATE)

FORM NO. 1 AUG 54 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101 WHICH MAY BE USED. (47)

State Dept. review completed

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OCI No. 2397-73
1 October 1973

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: North Korean Relations with Peking and Moscow: Developments During the Past Year

Summary

Pyongyang's efforts to strike a productive balance between Peking and Moscow have been seriously complicated by the developing Sino-US and US-Soviet detentes and by a common and overriding Russian and Chinese desire to preserve stability in the Korean peninsula. North Korean frustration surfaced this summer in the form of sharp attacks against Peking and what Pyongyang believed to be an over-relaxed Chinese attitude regarding unification and the withdrawal of US forces from the South. The North Koreans punctuated these complaints with efforts to improve relations with Moscow.

The period of open disharmony between Peking and Pyongyang was short-lived, however, and the Chinese are presently making new efforts to shore up the relationship. Most significantly, Peking is giving strong support in the UN for the North Korean-approved Algerian resolution on the Korean question.

The reemergence of the old pattern of effective North Korean exploitation of the Sino-Soviet conflict must be somewhat reassuring to Kim Il-sung and his government. But the events of the past two years have left the North Koreans with few illusions as to the reliability and permanence of major power support. Pyongyang is beginning to assert an increasingly independent posture vis-a-vis Peking and Moscow and is taking its search for political backing to the "third-world." North Korea realizes that third-world support cannot fully replace Chinese and Soviet backing, and Kim Il-sung will continue to play his

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time-tested game of maneuver within the Sino-Soviet context for whatever advantage he can extract. The degree of his success will depend heavily, however, on developments within the overshadowing US-Peking-Moscow relationship.

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Disenchantment with Peking

The first concrete indicator of waning Sino-North Korean relations was provided by Kim Il-sung's comments

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in June 1973. Kim expressed displeasure with Peking's "interference" in North Korean affairs and indicated that his relations with Moscow were better. Kim pointedly criticized Mao, claiming that he had "only confused" the Chinese people. These remarks were not a case of isolated posturing for a pro-Soviet guest. North Korean diplomats subsequently picked up and expanded on Kim's anti-Chinese themes. The picture they painted strongly suggested that Pyongyang believed Peking was no longer willing to fully support North Korean policies on such basic issues as reunification and the American military presence on the peninsula. On the contrary, Pyongyang appeared to be reacting to Chinese pressure to adopt positions that would serve Peking's larger political interests at the expense of immediate North Korean objectives.

A reassesment of policies vis-a-vis Peking was obviously underway well before public surfacing of this anti-Chinese line. It was likely the subject of considerable study and debate at the North Korean party plenum in December 1972. By this time, Pyongyang had ample reason to question the value of its close ties with Peking that had existed since relations were re-cemented in 1970 following the Cultural Revolution.

Kim Il-sung had anticipated that his agreement in 1972 to enter talks on unification with Seoul would lead to substantial erosion of the South's international position and weakening of Pak's domestic position; most important in Kim's view, it would accelerate the departure of US troops from South Korea. The Chinese almost certainly encouraged Pyongyang in the latter belief and strongly supported Kim's decision. But by the fall of 1972 the talks were stalled, and although North Korea's international position did improve, his objectives vis-a-vis US forces seemed no nearer realization. Moreover, Pak strengthened his domestic position by extensive reforms and he continued to receive pledges of US military backing. Deeply disturbed by these developments, Pyongyang adopted a strident

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propaganda campaign to press for US withdrawal as a prerequisite for any progress in the negotiations.

The Chinese, whose perspective had changed in the wake of improved ties with the US and entry into the UN, saw matters differently. While Peking's support for the North Korean position remained strong, it did not back the North's tougher demands for immediate US troop withdrawal. The North Koreans were also less than satisfied with Peking's performance at last fall's UN General Assembly session. Peking lobbied for resolutions urging an end to US and UN roles in Korea in 1972, but its support was less than enthusiastic. Chinese officials at the UN even implied to American diplomats that Peking was not interested in rapid US withdrawal. As General Assembly consideration of the Korean issue approached, Peking, perhaps sensing defeat or a confrontation with the US, assumed a lower posture on the question. The heavy trouncing of the North Korean position in the final vote was a grave disappointment to Pyongyang, and the fact that the Chinese took the defeat in stride gave the North Koreans little consolation.

Pyongyang's disenchantment was probably capped by its reading of events in Indochina. North Korea saw the Vietnam settlement primarily as evidence of Chinese willingness to pressure another divided Communist state to accept a political compromise which left unification for the distant future. The North's irritation was almost surely heightened by a speech Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei made in Pyongyang in December, in which he implied that the Chinese saw the Vietnam settlement as a model to apply in Korea. By the winter of 1972, Pyongyang had correctly perceived that Peking was committing itself not to the support of immediate or quick unification, but to a gradual and uncertain process avoiding political or military risks.

A Lukewarm Russian Embrace

Pyongyang's disappointment with Peking left the door open for the USSR, and the North Koreans

moved to restore a more balanced relationship with its two major Communist allies. In recent years, the USSR had been openly unenthusiastic about Kim Il-sung's policies, and Soviet desire for stability on the peninsula and detente with the US paralleled Chinese interests in most basic respects. Moscow nonetheless saw some easy political capital to be gained in responding to North Korea's overtures for improved relations that began in late 1972.

Soviet propaganda began to pick up Pyongyang's line that the presence of US forces in the South is the sole obstacle to unification. Moscow began a series of high-level exchanges, culminating in February 1973 with an unusual meeting between Secretary Brezhnev and Kim Tong-kyu, Pyongyang's senior official for international Communist affairs. The Soviets followed up with a strong endorsement of Kim Il-sung's five-point unification proposal, which focused heavily on arms reduction, particularly the withdrawal of foreign forces. Soviet diplomats, in meetings with American officials, began to stress the importance of the commitment on troop withdrawal in reaching a solution to the Korean question.

Nevertheless, Moscow's response stopped far short of the kind of political support Pyongyang had hoped to obtain. A 25 April article in Pravda endorsed US troop withdrawal but continued to convey Moscow's lack of enthusiasm on unification. Pravda noted the complexity of this issue, claiming that "no rapid measures were likely" and that "it would require a long period of time." The paper steered away from any explicit endorsement of Pyongyang's schemes for achieving rapid unification through confederation or any other means.

Paradoxically, Moscow's awareness of North Korea's difficulties with Peking appears to have allowed the Soviets to be even more flexible in dealing with the Korean question. Since the beginning of 1973 Moscow has permitted a number of South Korean citizens to visit the USSR, has allowed Seoul to ship trade goods through the Soviet Union to Europe, and has increasingly authorized its diplomats to engage in conversations

with South Korean counterparts. Most recently, Moscow permitted Seoul to send a 38-member sports team to participate in the World University Games in Moscow--a development which prompted the North Koreans to keep their athletes at home. By taking these steps, Moscow appeared to be actively exploring a two-Korea solution--a sobering development indeed for Kim Il-sung.

Peking Responds

Pyongyang's flirtation with Moscow, despite the lukewarm Russian embrace, appears to have produced at least some of the desired results in Peking. In recent weeks, the Chinese have been newly solicitous of Pyongyang. The 25th anniversary of the North Korean regime on 8 September provided a convenient occasion for a display of high-level goodwill. A friendship delegation headed by Central Committee Vice Chairman Li Te-sheng traveled to Pyongyang and was received by Kim Il-sung. Chou En-lai and three of the four other Vice Chairmen attended a reception at the Korean embassy in Peking. A Peoples Daily editorial, as well as a speech given by Li Te-sheng, reassured Pyongyang of China's general support for unification and withdrawal of American forces from the peninsula. Both also contained a sharp denunciation of a two-Korea approach, obviously aimed at exploiting Moscow's current vulnerability on this issue. Just prior to the anniversary, Peking had scored similar points by roundly criticizing South Korean participation in the World University Games in Moscow.

In addition to this "stroking" campaign, the Chinese have also assumed a higher posture than the Soviets in lobbying for Pyongyang's interests in the UN. In New York last week Chinese Ambassador Huang Hua emphasized, in private talks with US ambassador Scali, Peking's support for the Algerian resolution on the Korean question. Huang implied that UN membership for both Korea would lead to a perpetual separation of the peninsula, a position that directly parallels that of North Korea.

Peking's renewed courtship of North Korea

demonstrates that Pyongyang's old Sino-Soviet balancing game can still be played to some effect. The Chinese, at this point, may be particularly vulnerable to Kim Il-sung's tactics. There are a number of related factors, including ideological and domestic political considerations, that limit China's willingness to turn its back on North Korea. But in this case, Peking's forthcoming response may be directly linked to what seems to be a pause in the Sino-US detente. The Chinese, under sharp Soviet propaganda attack and perhaps sensing that last summer's Nixon-Brezhnev summit has produced an imbalance in the Washington-Peking-Moscow triangle, appear to feel a positive need to keep their Korean allies as close to camp as possible.

Peking has sought to maintain the inside track in Pyongyang primarily through inexpensive political gestures which avoid any real damage to Sino-US relations. The Chinese, however, cannot get off so cheaply at the current UN General Assembly session. This is particularly true since North Korea has come to New York with more votes than last year, thus making the degree of Chinese support a critical factor in what shapes up as an extremely close decision. Peking no doubt hopes to avoid a major confrontation with the US over the Korean question if possible; much of its behind-the-scenes work at the UN has been directed at handling the issue with a minimum of acrimony and debate. But its public support for the Algerian resolution speaks for itself. The Chinese see less to gain this year and perhaps far more to lose by sacrificing North Korea's interests in the name of detente with Washington.

Changing Patterns

Pyongyang must take some satisfaction in the current situation, but it also remains painfully aware that neither Peking nor Moscow is prepared to provide the blank check it desires. Kim Il-sung will continue to maneuver within the Sino-Soviet context for whatever advantage he can extract. But over the longer term, the dynamics of great-power detente will further encourage the North Koreans to develop a more independent and "revolutionary" position vis-a-vis Peking and Moscow. Pyongyang's willingness to provide

fighter pilots to Egypt, its involvement in the training of African guerrillas, and its increasingly active participation in third-world forums--most recently at the nonaligned conference in Algiers--all bear witness to North Korean movement in this direction. Most recently, North Korean Premier Kim Il in his National Day address on 8 September played up Pyongyang's role in the vanguard of third-world revolutionaries. Nowhere in his long statement did he allude to the extensive help provided by China and the Soviet Union in the building of North Korea's military and economic establishments. Pyongyang has long stressed the importance of preserving political and ideological independence, but in the past it has been willing to subordinate these objectives in order to obtain Chinese or Soviet backing. In the absence of what it considers adequate support from its two major allies, it is only reverting to its more natural impulses.

Pyongyang has few illusions about the extent to which third-world support can replace Sino-Soviet backing; without the assistance of Moscow and Peking, unification on Kim Il-sung's general terms is most unlikely. Moreover, Pyongyang continues to depend heavily on the economic and military support provided by both allies. Yet Kim will undoubtedly be more comfortable in pressing his demands on Peking and Moscow if he enjoys the support of other "revolutionary" nations.

An improved standing in the third world, however, will not necessarily increase his leverage vis-a-vis Peking and Moscow. The Soviets and Chinese have so far taken a noncommittal attitude toward Pyongyang's increasing activity in the third world. But both may come to see some gain in the evolution of an independent North Korean position, since they could then more easily disavow responsibility for any rash action carried out by their sometimes unpredictable ally.